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Re-generating the nation: Youth, revolution and the politics of history in Côte d'Ivoire

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This chapter analyzes the discourse of generation and youth as it developed in the FESCI student movement of the 1990s in Côte d'Ivoire. The discourse's central elements have been transferred to the present-day Young Patriots movement that is playing a central role in the formulation and imposition of a relatively new political project that can be characterized as autochthony-driven. Generation and youth are argued to be powerful instruments in any politics of history as they ambivalently encompass continuity and rupture, inclusion and exclusion. The FESCI in its time made important claims about the historical trajectory and nationwide importance of its revolutionary struggle and the position of youth. These constructs are now being reclaimed by the Young Patriots in order to redefine their youth struggle in a political project that sees itself as a new stage in the emancipation of the Ivorian people from neo-colonial oppression. However, this time around, the inclusiveness of the vaguely defined category 'Ivorian people' hides the awkward exclusion of an equally ill-defined but strategically broad category of allochthones.

Introduction[1]

> The way is open, the signal has been given, the torch has just been handed over into the young, new, and unarmed hands that have no intention of grabbing a portfolio. (Dadié 2003: 170)[2]
>
> The new generation, the new youth of Côte d'Ivoire wants, like that is the case in all countries, live freely, live autonomously, live independently in its country; *That* is ours, it is our country, our ancestors have given this to us. (Charles Groguhet, 19 September 2003).[3]

These two quotes – the former from a renowned octogenarian writer and the latter from a militia leader in his thirties – give a taste of the rhetoric of youth and generation that features prominently in Ivorian political discourse these days. As many observers have rightly pointed out, at least since the December 1999 *coup d'état* – sometimes called the *coup d'état des jeunes* (Blé Goudé, 21 February 2000) – which removed President Henri Konan Bédié and his PDCI party (*Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire*) from power, youngsters have incessantly manifested themselves as new political actors (Konaté 2002, 2003, Banégas & Marshall-Fratani 2000, Chauveau & Bobo 2003). This became even more apparent when the military insurgency of September 2002 resulted in the formation of two movements whose names strongly evoke rejuvenation: the 'Young Patriots' (*Jeunes Patriotes*) who claim to defend the nation and its president, Laurent Gbagbo, against the rebels of the 'New Forces' (*Forces Nouvelles*) who, in turn, demand the immediate removal of the acting president as well as drastic institutional and constitutional changes.

Reviewing the political situation in mid-2003, one youth leader and prominent member of the Young Patriots' Alliance (*Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes*), Damana Adia Pickas, declared:

> It is our generation that is at the centre of attention these days. There are rebel chiefs who are of our generation, patriot chiefs who are of the same generation, and leaders of youth sections of political parties who provide equally from that generation. You

[1] Research for this paper was conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and among Ivorians in Europe (France, UK, Germany, and Belgium). I wish to thank all my interlocutors and the many people who have facilitated my field research, especially Alyoun Badara Sall, Jean-Marie Ahoussou, Koffi Koffi Didier, Jean Dekpai and Raymond Dakoua.

[2] All translations from French are mine.

[3] References in which the exact date is specified refer to statements made in public or in the course of interviews with me (between 2000 and 2003). For reasons of privacy, I use pseudonyms (in italics in the text) for most of my interlocutors, and real names for authors of statements made in public.

> can observe with me that the effervescence which reigns in our country today is a feat of that generation. So we have an important role to play not only in the FESCI but also in Côte d'Ivoire. (*Notre Voie*, 2 June 2003)

The loyalist Young Patriots and the insurgent New Forces are led by age-mates, Charles Blé Goudé and Soro Kigbafori Guillaume respectively, both 'youngsters' in their thirties who share the experience of having been militants in the FESCI student union (*Fédération Estudantine et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire*) during the 1990s.[4] Although the Ivorian press and many observers regularly point out that the two junior political actors gained celebrity in the legendary FESCI movement, they themselves speak about those years in quite different terms. While Soro Guillaume often distances himself from his past as a student leader to the extent of minimizing the importance of the movement, Blé Goudé – together with many fellow Young Patriot leaders who were FESCI members – publicly cherish the memory of their student activism. As explained elsewhere (Arnaut 2004a), this difference in attitude towards their student past is embedded in differential discourses. The Young Patriots stress their youthfulness and present themselves as members of 'a new generation' that announces the birth of a new Ivorian nation. In contrast, the New Forces prefer to emphasize their maturity and avoid mentioning any divisions among Ivorian citizens and residents in terms of age, ethnicity, religion or (even) nationality.

This chapter explores the 'youth' and 'generation' rhetoric in Côte d'Ivoire since the early 1990s, particularly in the FESCI student union and among the Young Patriots. It is argued that by galvanizing their historical links with the student union, the Young Patriots are reactivating significations and connections that were construed in the context of the deployment of the FESCI student movement in the 1990s, but inscribe these in a new political project that has all the makings of an autochthony movement.

Two of the features of the current autochthony movement can already be discerned in the opening quotes of this chapter. Both Dadié and Groguhet present the movement in terms of 'young' and 'new' which, as will be seen, is reminiscent of the way the FESCI presented itself in its time. When Bernard Dadié alleges that the 'hands' of the Young Patriots (whose praises he sings in this text) have 'no intention of grabbing a [ministerial] portfolio', he further evokes a series of meanings ranging from selfless commitment over patriotic sacrifice to revulsion against 'affairist' national politicians, which are also of

[4] Both Soro Guillaume and Blé Goudé held the highest position in the FESCI, that of secretary-general of the National Executive Bureau (*Bureau Exécutif National* – BEN). Soro Guillaume was secretary-general from 1995 until 1998 when he was replaced by Blé Goudé who stayed on until early 2001.

FESCI provenance. Dadié employs these meanings to characterize the patriotic youth as an anti-political, grass-roots civil-society movement that seeks to express the wishes and anxieties of 'the people' rather than impose itself on them. Charles Groguhet hints more clearly at whose political and economic interests the Young Patriot movement (to which he belongs) is dedicated to defend: those of Ivorians with ancestral connections within the country, in other words, the autochthones.

Whereas in the concluding sections this chapter specifically addresses the revival of FESCI discourse by the Young Patriots and their supporters, the chapter focuses on the construction of 'youth/student' and 'generation' in the context of the FESCI student movement of the 1990s. The material used is from fieldwork among former militants of the student union. This field work, conducted over a discontinuous period of three years, was multi-sited and 'multi-partisan'. I worked with former Fescists in Côte d'Ivoire (mainly Abidjan) as well as with several who have been living in Europe since they left in the FESCI exodus of the mid-1990s. Among the local and dispersed ex-Fescists, Young Patriot enthusiasts as well as fans or even representatives of the New Forces rebel movement are to be found. However, the bulk of my interlocutors are self-consciously struggling to resist this dichotomization and trying to carve out a space for themselves in an attempt to develop a critical perspective on the current predicament of their country, as well as on their past student activism and the FESCI legacy in general.

The oral and printed material which my research yielded is unravelled with the help of an analytic scheme that is presented in the following section. In a review of the sociological and anthropological literature on youth and generation, the way in which both concepts can be used to mark continuities while indicating ruptures can be seen, and suggests inclusiveness while imposing exclusions. Both dimensions are extremely relevant.

Firstly, the issue of constructing continuities and discontinuities invites a look at how a youth movement or a 'new generation' situates itself or is situated in a longer history of political activism or in an 'ideological tradition'. It has been suggested (see for example, Bayart 2003) that the Young Patriots, together with President Gbagbo, need to be situated in a 'nationalist tradition' that harks back to the period of decolonization (1945-1960). However, it is argued here that this claim arises from a politics of history whereby, indeed through their reciprocal association, Gbagbo and the Young Patriots are trying to lay claim to the 'nationalist tradition' not only to gain historical legitimacy for their new political projects but also to deny legitimacy to other 'nationalists', not least the ex-Fescists of the rebel movement, who are presently opposing these projects.

This brings us to the second issue of inclusion/exclusion. 'Youth' and 'generation' refer to age-based cross-sections of a population and when associated with historical movements can serve to stress their 'popular' or 'nationwide' character. However, as Groguhet's quote indicates, this vague all-inclusiveness may cover up certain exclusions (for example, the equally vaguely defined category of 'allochthones'). Together then, these plays on continuities/-discontinuities and inclusiveness/exclusivity feature in hegemonic struggles that consist of political claims on the *vox populi*, attempts to redefine citizenship, and economic options to limit redistribution to particular groups of citizens, for instance, autochthones.

'Youth' and 'generation': The politics of history and hegemonic struggles

In the social sciences, 'generation' is ambivalently defined in terms of alternation and flow, inclusion and exclusion. A textbook definition says that members of the same generation are 'contemporaries *or* [...] descended by the same number of degrees from a common ancestor' (Bacon 1964: 284, author's italics). Under the first condition (contemporaries), one can emphasize 'simultaneity' (Dithey in Marías 1968: 89) or what Ortega (in ibid) calls 'coevalness' and stress intra-generational cohesion, inclusion and solidarity, as well as inter-generational conflict (Eisenstadt 1962/1995, Turner 1998). Under the second condition (descent), the generation's specific location in historical time and social space is taken into account. From there, one can emphasize the fact that a generation constitutes itself or is constituted by events external to it (Mannheim in Bundy 1987: 305). What is more important in that respect is that a generation can include as much as it can exclude coevals such as women, non-initiates or strangers (see Rintala in Marías 1968: 94). In such a conception, one can stress inter-generational 'dependency' (Blaikie 1999: 128) or 'the relations through which successive generations are bound in the reproduction of social life' (Irwin 1998: 307), or, indeed, demand attention for intra-generational inequality and exclusion (Irwin 1996).

Since its early use in anthropology, 'generation' induces research and reflections on social and cultural conceptions of time, more particularly on how social formations (including anthropologists) deal with continuity and discontinuity. In one of the rare anthropological volumes dedicated to generations, age cohorts and social change, Spencer (1990: 18) remarks that 'the perception of time in regard to ageing goes in steps rather than in a smooth flow, for it is embedded in a chequered development of social relationships'. The opposition between time as a continuous flow and as a gradual process,

reflects the ideas Leach developed in two related essays – 'Cronus and Chronos' (1953) and 'Time and False Noses' (1955) – in which he distinguishes between 'eternal time' that goes on and on (Chronos) and time conceptualized as zigzagging (Cronus) (in Hugh-Jones & Laidlaw 2000: 177, 181). In the latter case, 'time is experienced as something discontinuous, a repetition of repeated reversal, a sequence of oscillations between polar opposites: night and day, winter and summer, drought and flood, age and youth, life and death' (ibid: 176). Interestingly enough, Leach illustrates this zigzag or pendulum conceptualization of time with Radcliffe-Brown's findings about the identification of alternating generations (of grandmother and grandchild). Otherwise, Leach's pendulum conception of time – which he sees as underlying all *rites de passages* – rules out a continuous Chrono(s)-logical time conception (ibid: 183). However, that is precisely the point which Spencer extracts from Van Gennep's and Turner's work on *rites de passage*, namely that 'history is not just concerned with the [eternal] succession of [age] cohorts, but with the symbolic elaboration of [historical, unprecedented] events'. In summary, 'all persons are similarly structured in relation to the historical transitions of their time; and the symbols and myths that compose this structure are interwoven with those of the more personal and routine transitions of life' (Spencer 1990: 22). In general, I think, Spencer's view helps us out of the impossible choice between time as rupture and time as flow. More importantly, it allows us to see how people mobilize the metaphoric of the 'routine transitions of life' – that is birth, youth and age-cohorts, adulthood and death – in the way they label, experience and/or contest 'historical transitions' in terms of rebirth or infantilization, rejuvenation or senescence, and such like.

A differential stress on continuity and discontinuity also affects the way in which youth is dealt with in anthropology, and more particularly how youth agency is valuated. In a review of the anthropological literature on youth, Bucholtz (2002) distinguishes between an approach in terms of 'adolescence' or transition towards adulthood, and an emerging anthropology of youth that stresses the 'here-and-now of young people's experience':

> Youth foregrounds age not as trajectory, but as identity, where *identity* is intended to invoke neither ... adolescence as a prolonged 'search for identity', nor [a] rigid and essentialized concept... (Bucholtz 2002: 532; italics in the original)

Here Bucholtz urges us to avoid both 'transition thinking' and reification in favour of accentuating youth agency and identity. Such a view, it could be

argued, may have prevented authors from summarizing, for instance, the history of the Senegalese students of the 20th century, in the following phrase:[5]

> The intention of students to be involved in the life of their nation as members of civil society ... does not take into account the fact that they are only in transition, over which they have no control because they have no impact on the socio-economic stakes. So instead of being actors/initiators of this change, they have turned into mere artefacts of this evolution... (Bathily, Diouf & Mbodj 1995: 401)

However, it is easier to be scandalized by the reduction of youth to a residual category (see Federici 2000: 50) than to remedy it without ending up with a view of youth that may crudely overstress youth's impact on society whether as liberators or as destroyers (see Seekings 1993).

This chapter attempts to pave a way out of this dyadic trap by focusing on how youth at particular moments in time is politically, socio-economically and culturally constructed *and* constructs itself in contested discourses of history and society, continuity and rupture (see Burgess this volume). My overall stance concerning the constructedness of 'youth' is aptly expressed in the following quote by Durham (2000: 118) in a review of the anthropological literature on youth in Africa:

> the conceptualization of cohorts and generational experience is deeply embedded in a politics of history. This is a politics of the present. ... Claims to the position of youth, claims about the nature of youth, and moral claims about youth are centrally involved in the reinvention of political and social space. They are used to mobilize similar *kinds* of temporal frameworks, in the negotiations of what kinds of power are available and where they can be exercised, and by whom.

Durham argues in favour of a doubly deconstructive focus on youth or generational 'identities'. Firstly, in a sense Durham could be said to be responding to Bourdieu's (1985: 144) slightly immoderate claim that 'divisions in age cohorts or generations are entirely variable and constitute the object of manipulation' by pointing to the discursive limits/grounds of such manipulability. 'Generation', Durham claims, features in particular activations of 'temporal frameworks' or in what Werbner (1999) calls 'politicized memory'. In this respect, Hall (1990: 225) remarks:

> Far from being grounded in a mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

[5] This quote does not do justice to an otherwise richly documented and properly argued paper.

Secondly, Durham intimates that 'youth' as an identity category is seen as a temporal and local outcome of hegemonic struggles of subjectification and power distribution. The negotiation of historical positions described by Hall takes place, as Roseberry (1996: 77) has put it, 'in the dynamic tension between discursive fields and social fields of force'. Thus, identity constructions are articulated 'within present social reality *to create* a specific route of empowerment' (Van Dijk 1998: 156).

The above digression into the anthropological literature on generation and youth demonstrates what many have hinted at (see for example Comaroff & Comaroff 2000) but only a few (such as Burgess this volume) have taken much further, namely that generation and youth are discursive constructs in a politics of history and in hegemonic struggles. In both, I argue, generation and youth, because of what seems to be their inherent (cosmological?) ambiguity, are powerful instruments to ambivalently encompass continuity and rupture, inclusion and exclusion. In the following sections, how these constructs were strongly articulated in the context of the FESCI student movement in the course of the 1990s is examined. First, the issue of continuity is explored and the way it was articulated in terms of family descent and ideological filiation. In the two subsequent sections, I consider aspects of discontinuity as they are expressed in terms of 'the new (activist-based) family' and 'new (ideology-based) politics'. In the first and last sections, the issue of inclusion/exclusion is addressed by observing how the FESCI ambiguously associated and dissociated itself with regard to the 'populus'.

Narratives of continuity: Reproduction and the emergence of a national generation

The origins of the independent student union FESCI in 1990 are usually situated in the international context of new democratic impulses (South Africa, Germany) and the specific Ivorian context of ongoing economic deterioration and social antagonisms (Akindès 2000, 2001). Within this context, many authors (Loucou 1992: 160, Proteau 2002: 100, Konaté 2002: 780, Bailly 1995: 36) recount the same anecdote about power cuts that prevented students from properly preparing for their exams and that provoked the first student demonstrations on 19 February 1990. The repeated strikes and protest actions that followed gave rise to a number of small student associations that later

joined together to form the FESCI federation, which presented itself as an alternative to the official government-controlled student association MEECI (*Mouvement des Etudiants et Elèves de Côte d'Ivoire*). Together with the new student unions, the existing independent teachers' unions SYNARES and SYNESCI, amongst others, demanded multipartyism and democratic elections.[6] In April 1990 the government gave in to the demands of the street and in May it officially recognized more than a dozen political parties and condoned a free press. From October onwards, a series of elections (presidential, parliamentary, and communal) were held, which confirmed the ruling PDCI's power.

When evaluating these rapid and drastic changes in Ivorian political life after more than thirty years of single-party rule, it is tempting to focus on the ferocity of the youth activists as the vanguard of a broad democratization movement. In conversations with former FESCI members on the early history of the student movement, my respondents do not so much play down the avant-garde qualities of the youth but rather historicize them. The overall image that arises from these discussions is that, from the very beginning, the youth movement presented itself as accomplishing a historical mission. The memories and documents of my interlocutors attest to the fact that from the start and throughout much of its later history the FESCI strongly situated itself as being embedded in a reform movement which spanned the entire history of Côte d'Ivoire and concerned its entire people.

In one conversation *Bila Foté,* who was a senior student in 1990, pointed out to me that the February riots were not the kind of spontaneous expression of discontent they appeared to be. He recalled how ten days before the riots started a conference was organized by the writer and anti-Houphouëtist activist Jean-Marie Adiaffi and the Club Cheikh Anta Diop. 'I don't remember the exact theme of the conference', he began by saying, 'but that was not important because conference themes were often a cover-up for voicing our collective protest against Houphouët.' He described how, towards the end of the conference, Professor Goré Bi of the Department of Oral Literature, and later a member of the Social Democratic Party (USD) of Zadi Zaourou, intervened:

[6] In 1970 two independent teachers' unions were created. The SYNESCI *(Syndicat National de l'Enseignement Secondaire de Côte d'Ivoire*) was for people working in secondary education, and was first led by the later founder of the RDR, Djéni Kobina. The SYNARES (*Syndicat Africain de Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur*) was for researchers and those working in higher education. It was founded under Francis Wodié and included all other later socialist leaders (Laurent Gbagbo, Bernard Zadi Zaourou, and Bamba Moriféré) among its members at one stage or another.

> [Goré Bi] said he was deceived by our attitude: we shouted, we were happy, but that was not what was expected from us. 'All the revolutions in the world,' he said 'were conducted by youngsters' and we were happy to just listen and shout. This has remained in my mind ever since. And in retrospect, I have connected it to the protest which broke out 10 days later, on 19 February 1990. It is true what he said. If you look at the French Revolution, Danton and Robespierre, they were youngsters. What Gore Bi asked of the youngsters was to make the country progress. (*Bila Foté*, 22 September 2003)

If *Bila Foté* makes it sound as if the intervention of Goré Bi provided a kind of 'marching order' for revolutionary students, others among my interlocutors emphasize that even in this early period students claimed a certain agency in deliberating the potential import of their movement, and reflected on their actions as potential revolutionaries.

Sanga Dogon (24 May 2003) – a fellow student activist of *Bila Foté* in the early days of the FESCI – recalled a debate which took place on the evening of 19 February during which students discussed the significance of the power cuts and the street violence. According to *Sanga Dogon*, two opinions divided the assembly. One group saw students as an intermediary class between the elite and the masses. For them, the power cuts signalled the gradual 'pauperization of the intellectual elite [of students], whom were thereby turned into some kind of proletariat'. The second group, whom *Sanga Dogon* considered to be the real revolutionaries, 'considered the power cuts as a symbol of the failure of the political system to cope with the economic recession since the early 1980s'. Arguing that 'we needed a new system altogether, a new social and economic dynamic', the second group, according to *Sanga Dogon,* saw its demands for better working conditions (electricity at night) or for (student) scholarships as appeals to the government to satisfy the minimal conditions for the continued existence of 'students' as 'people who think; who reinvent the future of the nation'.[7] In the debate, the second option won, according to *Sanga Dogon*, and with it the revolutionary ideas of the student union fraction of which he himself as well as *Bila Foté* were members.[8]

[7] According to Bailly (1995: 36), in February 1990 the students protested against 'obscurity and obscurantism'. In *Sanga Dogon*'s classification, the first group can be seen reacting against 'obscurity', while the second group protested instead against the 'obscurantism' of the government.

[8] Both *Sanga Dogon* and *Bila Foté* were leading members of CESCOCI, one of the most influential among the proto-Fesci student associations. CESCOCI provided the first two secretaries-general of FESCI, Amos Beugré and Ahipeaud Martial, and received financial support and ideological backing from the opposition heavyweight Bamba Moriféré.

Leaving aside the differences of opinion, this reconstruction of the early history of the student movement captures the central concern of the students with different aspects of their *reproduction*, ranging from the role of students in the rejuvenation of the existing anti-Houphouëtist opposition, to their own reproduction as a class of intellectuals, to the reproduction of society or of the nation as a whole. The few sociological accounts of youth and students in Côte d'Ivoire partly confirm this by considering the issue of reproduction in at least two different ways. In the 1980s several sociologists signalled what has been called 'the accumulation of youngsters' who find it increasingly difficult to become part of adult life and what this implies in terms of regular earnings and family responsibilities (Touré 1985: 287-88, Le Pape 1986; 112). Others have focused on the crisis in the reproduction of educated youngsters and observed how the cuts in education budgets yielded unequal access to education (Le Pape & Vidal 1987: 73) and led to the overall marginalization of young intellectuals in Côte d'Ivoire in the 1990s (Proteau 2002). In the analysis that follows, I examine how youngsters have addressed these issues of reproduction in narratives of family history and in a metaphoric of ideological filiation. These narratives, I argue, give shape to the kind of continuities from which the Fescists of the 1990s have arisen as a 'national generation'.

Several former Fescists situated their juvenile activism in family narratives which in some way or another connect with historical anti-Houphouëtism. They evoked the fact that their fathers or uncles were already opponents of Houphouët-Boigny as early as the 1940s or later. Others have broken off relations with their families because of the latters' clientelist obligations towards the PDCI party. But even if their families had no political history, several former Fescists have recounted the predicament of their forebears as resulting from the despised politics of the ruling party. They portray their parents as poor peasants who had small plantations and whose revenues were scarce because the single-party state paid low prices to (small) planters, received high prices on the world market, and used the money for its own enrichment.[9]

With the help of family stories, the former Fescists have firmly inscribed their student activism in larger narratives that span the entire political and socio-economic history of Côte d'Ivoire since its first steps on the way to independence. This same historical scope can also be found back in the documents which my respondents provided me with. In a sense, these official

[9] For reasons of space I cannot include original statements illustrating the family narratives of former Fescists. Quoting and interpreting them requires the presentation of a good deal of contextual and historical information for which there is no space here (see Arnaut 2004a).

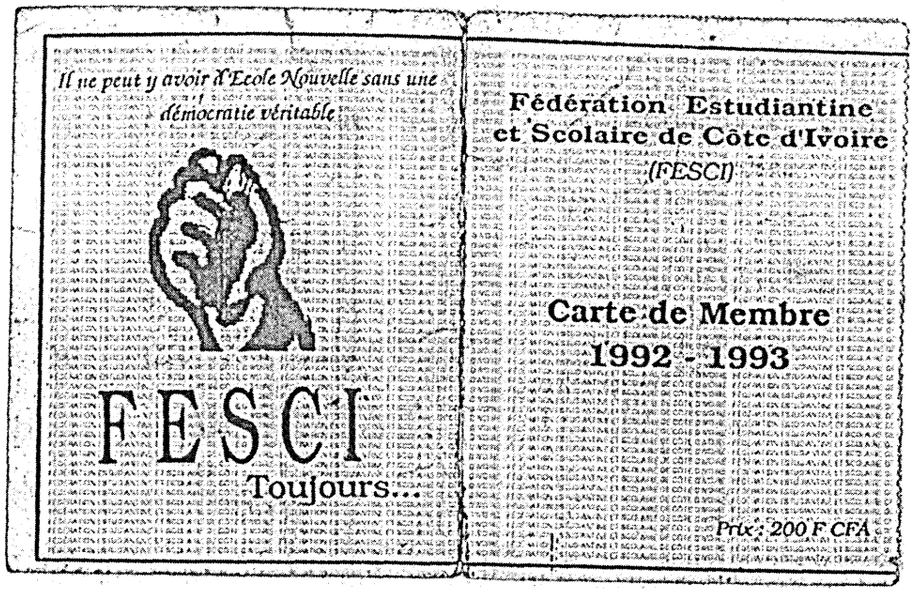

Figure 5.1: 1992-1993 FESCI membership card.

documents spell out, in terms of ideological filiation, what the family narratives explicate in terms of kin-based experiences.

In 1995 the FESCI published a booklet that was entirely dedicated to the history of the Ivorian student movement from the 1950s until FESCI's creation in 1990.[10] In the preface the then secretary-general Soro Guillaume claims that:

> There is a certain continuity in the struggle of the student youth for about half a century: this continuity resides in the fact that, apart from its corporatist claims, the youth continues to occupy an avant-garde position in the global movement for the liberation of the Ivorian people. (FESCI 1995: 3)

[10] The 1995 brochure was published at a time when the student union was trying to rebuild itself after (i) many Fescists had already left and were leaving the country, (ii) heavy repression had frightened many militants into hiding or forced them to abandon the struggle, and (iii) internal disputes had divided the FESCI membership. The 1995 publication coincided with (i) the belief that after the unanimous election of Soro Guillaume as secretary-general in February 1995, the student movement could retrieve its past strength, and (ii) the hope that democratic presidential elections (in 1995) could remove President Bédié from office. While the latter hope proved to be an illusion, the former belief largely materialized.

The genealogy which the folder constructs is that between the FESCI and the UGECI, which was created in 1956 and protested heavily against the mounting pro-colonial attitude of the Ivorian leadership.[11] After eight pages of detailed historical reconstruction, the folder concludes that:

> Today, the spirit of UGECI is revived in the spirit of the FESCI which cannot die because it goes in the sense of history. (ibid: 11)

While the family narratives often explicate the position of the youngsters in negative terms (of anti-Houphouëtism), the 1995 brochure is formulated in a more constructive (ideological) way, not least by evoking the ongoing project of the liberation of the Ivorian people. From this positive, or perhaps counter-hegemonic discourse, the Côte d'Ivoire of Houphouët-Boigny is seen as a historical deviation from the right course (the sense of history) which was set by certain former student movements and which the FESCI continues to chart. This, *Marc Dounga* (1 March 2003) expresses aptly when he recounts how he was pursued by the state as a mob leader and an agitator (*meneur de troupes*). 'Yes, we the Fescists,' he says, 'were considered to be *des éclaireurs de conscience* of Côte d'Ivoire.' Read as a military term in the context of *Dounga's* battle with the regime, *éclaireur* (scout) signifies 'precursor' or 'explorer' engaged in reconnaissance. Taken in the more literary or academic sense induced by 'conscience', *éclaireurs* (guides) refers to the intelligentsia (the 'illuminati' in *Dounga's* metaphoric) who, as *Sanga Dogon* (24 May 2003) said before, take it on themselves to 'reinvent the future of the nation'.

In this rhetoric of militant vanguards and intellectual torchbearers, the Fescists reveal the full ambiguity with which they simultaneously identify with the nation or the Ivorian people, and differentiate themselves from it. This ambivalence, I argue, is largely sustained by the metaphors of generation and youth. The latter terms can combine continuity with rupture as well as exclusion with inclusion. In all, youth and generation are powerful discursive instruments for articulating the multi-layered crisis of reproduction that the student youth felt it was entangled in.

[11] The controversies of the 1950s mainly centered around (i) the decision by Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI to break off all ties with the French Communist Party in 1950 (the so-called *désapparentement*), (ii) the acceptance of the *Loi-Cadre* of 1956 which critics felt did not go far enough in the direction of independence, and (iii) the Ivorian leaders' enthusiasm to join the Franco-African community in 1958 – a stance that different student organizations bluntly rejected (de Benoist 1994, Diarra 1997: 56-64, Proteau 2002: 61-98).

In May 1994, the FESCI published a pamphlet containing a poem authored by 'The Voice of 25 Fescists Detained at the National Police School and at the State Security Police (DST)' (Figure 5.2). In two stanzas the poem associates the humiliation and the suffering of 'a youth' with that of 'a country' and 'a people'.

> My *parents*; I have experienced detention and I have been ashamed
> Yes, I have been ashamed and what kind of shame?
> The shame of a country
> The shame of a people
> The shame of a youth.

Towards the end, the poem qualifies the shame as that which is 'armed to the teeth with guns, truncheons, electric whips, and torture chairs', but predicts that some day this shame will only be 'a memory on the triumphant path to real liberty'.

In statements such as those, dramatically voiced from the centres of repression, the geographical, historical and sociological contours of the student movement dissolve into that of an entire country and a whole people, their history and their future. Under critical conditions, FESCI activists speak out in the name of a student population that sees its existence threatened by fierce repression and its reproduction under jeopardy by austerity measures and disqualification. In the above-mentioned poem, as in the entire genealogical discourse of families and ideologies, FESCI seems to put the ultimate hope of its reproduction in the hands of the Ivorian society as a whole. This people, the family narratives illustrate, continued (throughout its history of subjugation and repression) to produce the kind of youth that guarantees its future liberation. This claim is formulated in the mission statement that was published in one of the few official documents that the organization produced – more than three years after its foundation in 1990.

> The autonomous and apolitical movement which we take upon ourselves, expresses the will of a new Ivorian youth to fight for a better life and to assume its *historical role* which consists in taking position in a societal project that takes shape in the popular aspirations. (FESCI 1993, this author's italics)

While both the 1994 poem and the 1993 mission statement tie together the fate of the youth with that of the people, both documents also mark certain ruptures and exclusions. *Parent* (in French), the addressee of the poem, could be wrongly interpreted as any parent or family member but '*parent*' in Fesci-speak signifies 'member of the new (political or union) family' and implies a distancing from the biological family. This rupture finds its political counterpart

Fédération Estudiantine & Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire
F. E. S. C. I.

Poème

La honte

Mes parents ; j'ai vécu la détention et j'ai connu la honte
oui j'ai connu la honte et quelle honte ?

la honte d'un pays
la honte d'un peuple
la honte d'une jeunesse
la véritable honte incarnée

Mes amis ; mes camarades de lutte, j'ai vu la honte en personne et

j'ai mal à mon pays
j'ai mal à mon peuple
j'ai mal à ma jeunesse.

Car j'ai vu la honte de sa destinée,
la honte assasine de liberté

Oui j'ai vécu la honte, et quelle honte ?

Une honte indescriptible. La honte de lendemains incertains parce que obscurcis par des personnes hélas peu honteuses.

Et j'ai vu la honte planer comme cherchant une proie et se poser sur mon pays.

Assitôt, j'ai vu une jeunesse prompte et spontanée lutter contre la honte. La lutte fut âpre. Mais la honte fut vaincue malgré elle.

Alors mes amis, j'ai vu la honte, une honte méconnaissable s'en aller la queue entre les pattes, la tête basse, confuse et honteuse
Et une vive lueur d'espoir a pointé à l'horizon éclairant le visage des lutteurs.

Désormais la honte, oui la véritable honte, cette honte qui brutalise des jeunes gens, traumatise les jeunes lutteurs pour leur arracher des aveux,
Cette honte que j'ai connue ne sera qu'un souvenir sur la voie triomphale de la liberté véritable qui comme le bien triomphe du mal, triomphera de cette honte armée jusqu'aux dents de fusils, de matraques, de fouets électriques, de chaises de torture.

Adieu honte honteuse.

Ecole de Police, le 31 Mai 1994.

La voix des 25 Fescistes détenus
à l'Ecole Nationale de Police et à la D. S.T.

Figure 5.2: Poem '*La honte*' by 'The Voice of 25 Fescists Detained at the National Police School and at the State Security Police (DST)'.

in the mission statement which presents the movement as apolitical. By calling itself apolitical, the FESCI maintains its distance from regular party politics and situates its goals at the higher (ideological) level of a societal project. Both ruptures feature in a broader positioning of the student youth as simultaneously acting with and somehow separately from the people. This fundamental ambiguity is examined later as being handled with techniques of populism and crowd management.

Social ruptures: The invention of the new family

By the end of 1989 and in his last year of secondary school (*lycée*) in Abidjan, *Aganda Soul* decided to join FESCI, which was then headed by Ahipeaud Martial. Although he never became a national FESCI leader, *Aganda Soul* was a strong activist and an important recruiter of the student union until 1995. Much later he co-founded the Ivorian Movement for Youth Rights (MIDJ) and is currently directing an internationally operating anti-globalist organization in Abidjan. Looking back on more than a decade of what he calls his 'communist engagement' in the struggle of the Left (*la lutte de gauche*), *Aganda Soul* (24 September 2003) muses:

> Well, at a certain time we did not have the occasion to live with our *natural families* but we had the chance of living with another *political or trade union family* (*famille politique ou syndicale*) [...] What a political friend or a friend from the union (*un ami politique ou syndicale*) has done for me, even a relative (un *parent*) has not done. My studies have been paid by my political friends. My parents said that I was lost. It is only now that some of my kinsfolk speak to me. When I joined the FESCI, my elder brother chased me from the house. (this author's italics)

As was also observed by Konaté (2002: 785) and Proteau (2002: 152-54), the 'parent-talk' of the Fescists is both important and highly significant. In my conversations with former Fescists, 'family' can refer to kin-based ('natural') or activist-based (party, union) socialities but can also function as a metaphor for the educational or the state system, administered by school and university authorities (elders), and ultimately controlled by the president in the figure of the 'Father of the Nation'.

Parental reactions to their sons' and daughters' activism in the FESCI ranged from explicit agreement, to resignation, or to fierce opposition. These reactions often had a direct effect on the living conditions of the students as well as on their academic curriculum. The ill-fated – like *Aganda Soul* who lost all family support because of his activism – either sought alternative funding from the sponsors (elders, professionals) of the wider opposition movement or joined the

personal support networks of more privileged students. *Kakou Bi*, currently a colleague of *Aganda Soul* in the anti-globalist movement, was among those fortunate enough to have a father who supported his activism. He recalls that during his time in the FESCI:

> My room was called 'the palace of the people'. I kept my key in a place where everybody knew where it was. You come in, you eat, you sleep. ...
> One's natural family had become one's comrades-in-arms *(camarades de lutte)*. Really, it was all about sharing. Hence the word *parent*. Many comrades had been rejected by their parents. For many years they lived with FESCI members. We paid their fees, we put them up, and we fed them, because that was the idea: one must share everything, the misery and the joy. (*Kakou Bi*, 23 September 2003)

While *Aganda Soul* uses 'relative' *(parent)* and 'friend' (*ami*) to distinguish between the 'natural' and the 'new' family, *Kakou Bi* intimates the substitution of the latter by the former and situates this switch in the term *parent*. Indeed, the 'new family' in the fullest sense of the word was given shape in the resignification of the word 'parent'. Very soon after FESCI's foundation in 1990 the word *parent* was used to refer to any fellow activist.[12]

The resignification of *parent* is not so much the change in its meaning, rather its referent. *Parent* can point to any member of the 'union family', but retains its full meaning in terms of material and moral support.[13] Like any 'natural family', the new family also has its relative elders and youngsters. 'Elder' parents are members of the extended 'political family' who are either active in opposition politics (for example, Bernard Zadi Zaourou, Bamba Moriféré and Laurent Gbagbo) or members of the independent unions (SYNARES and SYNESCI) who actively supported the Fescists in general or individual members or small groups of them in particular.

The 'new family' thus constituted, stories about the 'natural family' and the break away from its stifling grip (*embrigadement*) lead us into the realm of repression against the FESCI activists. This repression took the form of open violence by the armed forces, official exclusion from school (*radier*) or from specific departments (*réorienter*). Moreover, repression also extended into the

[12] According to *Bila Foté* (22 September 2003), in the early days of the student movement *parent* was used as a password among student activists. When a student entered a room where a clandestine meeting was being held, one asked him whether he or she was a *parent*. Very soon, however, the password was known by friend and foe alike and was used publicly as an identity label.

[13] *Parent* was sometimes used as a term of reference, such as in the sentence *J'étais le chef des parents à Yopougon* ('I was the head of the student activists at Yopougon'), but also as a term of address, as in the salutation *'hé parent'* ('hey comrade').

private sphere and led to tragic family ruptures and exclusion from home. In a group conversation with former Fescists now living in Germany, *Mandege Louis* (1 March 2003) recalls the conflict he had with his elder brother who was financially responsible for him after their father died at an early age. It was not so much that his brother was against his student activism, *Mandege Louis* explained, but apparatchiks from the PDCI ruling party threatened to sack his brother if he could not persuade his younger relative to abandon the FESCI. The threat was enormous: if his elder brother lost his job as a civil servant, the whole extended family would suffer.

To summarize, the invention of the 'new (FESCI) family' served to create a novel, activist-based sociality that marked a clear rupture with the immediate society. In the way the new family was articulated by the former Fescists one can observe how youngsters, in the words of Eisenstadt (1995/1962: 77) 'rebelled against their elders and the traditional familistic setting with its stress on the latter's authority'. More than that, the metaphor of the 'new family' served to visualize a gerontocratic complex – the interpenetration of the authority of the 'natural family' and that of the state which continued to be ruled by the old PDCI party. However, in contrast to what Eisenstadt indicates, in statements by former Fescists, the despised 'traditional' aspect of the family or the system is not so much identified as cultural in the sense of ethnic or 'tribal' but as political in the sense of political culture or established ways of conducting politics.

Political rupture and the break with 'ancestral politics'

> When Houphouët died and Bédié took over [in December 1993], I was in prison [together with a number of other Fescists]. Within weeks, Bédié sent one of his ministers to come and tell us that 'the Côte d'Ivoire of the grandfather is no more' (*la Côte d'Ivoire du grand-père est dépassé*). We knew what it meant: the system would become even more repressive and [this repression was to be] directed against specific personalities. (*Marc Dounga*, 1 March 2003)

In the above excerpt, *Marc Dounga* recalls that when 'grandfather' Houphouët-Boigny died, Bédié took on the role of the 'father' who more directly supervised, personally manipulated, and (if unsuccessful) mercilessly penalized his disobedient 'children'.[14] According to *Sanga Dogon* (24 May 2003), the

[14] Interestingly, the 1993 political transition is presented in terms of alternating generations and hints at the system widely known throughout (West) Africa of joking relationships between grandparents and grandchildren whereby the child-parent rela-

shift from the violent but 'paternalistic' repression by Houphouët-Boigny to the more ruthless methods of Bédié had the effect of rendering the FESCI leadership more mistrustful and rude, and resulted in the movement stepping up, what he calls, its 'logic of rupture' (*la logique de rupture*).[15] This is exemplified by three parallel developments in the post-1993 era: the radicalization of the movement, 'distancing' through expatriation, and the autonomization from politics. Among these three, the latter requires most attention here because it subscribes most forcibly to the overall image of the FESCI as an anti-political, popular movement.

FESCI's radicalization can be measured from new developments in its overt and covert actions. In response to the mounting and more incisive repression of the Bédié regime, the FESCI employed more extreme methods of protest – such as hunger strikes – to its standard range of public demonstrations (Proteau 2002: 158). Simultaneously, it reorganized itself internally and set up shadow command structures such as a substitute national council and underground action groups to ensure it was less vulnerable to government repression against its public agitators.[16]

This internal redeployment of FESCI activism had its outward-bound, geopolitical counterpart in the massive exodus of Fescists from Côte d'Ivoire to Europe. Between 1994 and 1996 an estimated 3,000 Fescists and students left the country: first to London and later to Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark.[17] The expatriation was not only an escape from 'fatherly' repression under Bédié, but was also set up and seen as an astute contribution to the FESCI struggle. None of the Fescists went into exile in France. 'We were all anti-French,' explained *Sanga Dogon* (25 May 2003). 'For us, the Houphouët

tionship is seen as more 'serious'. See for example, Griaule (1948) and Drucker-Brown (1982).

[15] The repression against the student movement occurred in a legal vacuum. By June 1991 the student union was publicly outlawed but this ban was never legally formalized by the government. In defiance of its prohibition, the FESCI continued to demonstrate while its members and sympathizers were persecuted. Fescists who fell into the hands of the security forces – whom the Fescists called *les forces du désordre* – were detained in prisons, army camps and police stations around the country, often without being officially charged. There they underwent physical torture and psychological maltreatment (Amnesty International 1994).

[16] Former Fescists are still very discrete about covert action groups and secret operations but none of them denies that they were important and increasingly so in the second half of the 1990s (*Nien Fa & Marc Dounga*, 5 August 2003; *Boda Goro,* 15 March 2003).

[17] This exodus more or less came to a standstill in 1996 when all European countries introduced visa requirements for Ivorian visitors.

system only survived because of its neo-colonial relationship with France.' On non-French territory, many student refugees resumed their university studies while organizing themselves in political associations with the explicit goal of continuing the revolutionary struggle.[18] The rupture exemplified in the extraterritorial deployment of the student opposition forces was framed as doubly effective. The student diaspora broke away from neo-colonial Côte d'Ivoire (and its French patrons) and was meant to produce new intellectuals whose dispersion across Europe embodied the awaited multilateral geopolitics of the future Côte d'Ivoire.

If by going underground the FESCI was trying to safeguard its struggle from intervention by a repressive regime, and by going abroad it was avoiding neo-colonial dependency, the FESCI also spelled out its autonomization by 'going ideological' and thereby dissociating itself from established political practice. This needs to be understood in the wider political context of the 1990s.

When in April 1990 the government gave in to the demands of the street and introduced multipartyism, the junior and senior opposition activists organized themselves in almost inverse ways. On the one hand, small anti-government student unions merged into the single FESCI federation that was able to impose a monopoly of student representation on the campus.[19] On the other hand, the left-wing political movement crystallized into four small socialist parties built around former trade unionists: the FPI of Laurent Gbagbo, the PIT of Francis Wodié, the PSI of Bamba Moriféré, and the USD of Zadi Zaourou.[20] The contrast between the monolithic student movement and the fragmented 'democratic left' sharpened even further after 1993.

The death of Houphouët-Boigny heralded a political reshuffling of considerable consequence. In 1994 the ruling PDCI party broke up into a more 'nationalist' fraction represented by President Bédié and a more neo-liberal fraction which, in 1994, converted into the new political party, the RDR (*Rassemblement des Républicains*) of former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara. In the face of this political rearrangement, the left-wing opposition fragmented

[18] In 1994 former FESCI militants set up the MOÍRA (Movement of Ivorian Opponents in Germany) in Cologne. In 1996 this organization was partly replaced by the USP (People's Socialist Union) and the MLTCI (Movement for the Total Liberation of Côte d'Ivoire), both of which had their headquarters in London but regrouped anti-government militants dispersed all over Europe.

[19] This situation of absolute hegemony remained uncontested until very recently (June 2004) when a new student union emerged under the name of AGEECI (*Association Générale des Elèves et Etudiants de Côte d'Ivoire*). Apparently, AGEECI's creation provoked fierce reactions from the FESCI leadership (*Fraternité Matin*, 28 June 2004).

[20] FPI: *Front Populaire Ivoirien*; PIT: *Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs*; PSI: *Parti Socialiste Ivoirien*; USD: *Union des Socio-Démocrates*.

further. While some old-time opposition figures, such as Bernard Zadi Zaourou and Jean-Marie Adiaffi, joined Bédié's PDCI government, others like former SYNESCI leader Djeny Kobina co-founded the RDR. To make the ideological confusion complete, a number of socialist parties – most notably Laurent Gbagbo's FPI party – formed a strategic alliance with the newly created neo-liberal RDR. This anti-Bédié coalition called the Republican Front (*Front Républicain*) lasted until 1999 when it collapsed in the run-up to the 2000 elections in which Gbagbo and Ouattara both decided to stand as presidential candidates.

The Fescists perceived these rather bewildering reconfigurations of the Ivorian political scene during the 1990s as the result of 'big men' politics and former Fescists often speak in that respect of the post-1990 'multipartisan' instead of 'multiparty' system. The FESCI thus developed a discourse of rupture and autonomy in which it dissociated itself from opportunistic and personalistic party politics (*politique politicienne*) and emphasized its ideological tenacity.

One dramatic event in which FESCI expressed its autonomy from established political practice was the deposition of FESCI Secretary-General Eugène Djué in September 1994. Having been accused of surreptitiously accepting money from President Bédié in return for destabilizing the FESCI from within, Djué was precipitately replaced as the head of the FESCI by Jean Blé Guirao.[21] In a pamphlet on the matter, the new secretary-general put the FESCI leadership's decision in a broader light:

> Beyond the sanctions against Djué, it is the manifest wish of a generation to break with this ancestral past that pursues it relentlessly. (FESCI pamphlet, 12 October 1994)

Here, Blé Guirao denounces the repeated attempts of the system to buy its way into the student movement and calls upon the latter to express its independence and demonstrate its defiance. The tradition of corrupting opponents and dissidents into compliance is also evoked in the 1995 FESCI 'history' brochure in which Secretary-General Soro Guillaume declares:

> Facing the persistent attitude of surrendering, of compromising, and even of betrayal of the People by the intellectuals, there is, for the Present New Generation and in the Superior interest of the People, a challenge to take up. (FESCI 1995: 11, capitals in original)

[21] The list of FESCI leaders who were either accused of collaborating with 'the system' or eventually gave in to pressures from it is long. Accusations of treason were not only spread by Fescists but also by government agents who tried to destabilize the student movement.

What Guirao identifies as 'ancestral', Soro Guillaume qualifies as the 'persisting' political practice of clientelism, corruption and cooptation that emasculates the entire political domain including certain 'elder brothers' of the left-wing opposition parties. In the face of this, both FESCI leaders posited a break and announced the emergence of a 'new generation' of political actors. These actors, it was established in the same 1995 document, saw themselves as 'ideological' in the sense of being led by firm principles, the origins of which were situated in the 1950s and to which they stuck with heroic tenacity. At the same time, the FESCI adopted the image of an anti-political movement that struggled for and with 'the people' as distinct from the restricted group of political elites. Nevertheless, this self-presentation of the FESCI as a popular movement relied on more than the kind of rhetoric illustrated above. It was equally sustained by a comprehensive strategy of popular mobilization and specific populist tactics by which the FESCI imposed itself as the exemplary civil-society organization that voiced the wishes of the Ivorian youth and, by extension, those of the entire Ivorian people.

The organization of popular expression

> There can be no New School without a genuine democracy.
> (*Il ne peut y avoir d'Ecole Nouvelle sans une démocratie véritable.*) (Slogan on FESCI's membership card, see Figure 5.1.)

More than just demanding genuine democracy, the FESCI also put it into practice through a whole range of actions and events that explored and activated alternative ways of political expression. These included mass meetings, sit-ins and marches, sometimes accompanied by street violence. As one former Fescist summarized it, the FESCI was above all an 'organization of mobilization' (*Boda Goro*, 15 March 2003). *Sanga Dogon* explained this as follows:

> In order for the movement to become a societal phenomenon, it is necessary that the students crystallize themselves on FESCI's structure. An organization that does not demonstrate, that does not mobilize, dies. So, whenever there was an occasion we protested but not only by means of declarations, but also with the masses, with meetings. (*Sanga Dogon*, 24 May 2003)

Here, *Sanga Dogon* explains how the FESCI incessantly demonstrated its ability to mobilize crowds of students, whether by assembling them in a car

park at the Cocody campus, by bringing them together for a sit-in in front of the town hall, or by having them traverse the city from the Yopougon halls of residence *(cité)* to the Plateau administrative centre in Abidjan. Apart from some sticks and stones and a few charges of the so-called Baule tear gas (*lacrymogène Baule*) that students used to attack government cars or public buildings, they used no weapons other than their own bodies to block the streets, and their slogans and songs that offended the regime and its sympathizers.[22] The overall image of FESCI activism that arises from the way the student movement occupied the urban and national public space is one of spontaneous expression and impulsive behaviour that emerged from the revolutionary instinct of its members. In the following quote, *Mandege Louis* connects his own revolutionary feelings and the street violence with FESCI's double demand for educational and political reform.

> I was a rebel (*révolté*), the system bothered me. While smashing up a car or blocking a street, I felt comfortable because I told myself that it was they who were preventing the school system from developing, it was they who were preventing the people from fully playing their role.

However, like many other former Fescists I spoke to, *Mandege Louis* qualifies the grass-roots view of initiative and achievement and, later in the conversation demanded attention for the way FESCI transformed, channelled and structured the students' discontent.

> The whole issue was to pass from the stage of a rebel *(révolté)* who blocks the streets to that of a revolutionary (*révolutionnaire*) who speaks of the advent of a new society. (*Mandege Louis*, 1 March 2003)

When dealing with the matter of revolutionary practice, former Fescists focus on the command structure and the techniques used by the FESCI leadership to conduct the mobilization it triggered. That mobilization in itself, *Sango Dogon* explained in the opening quote of this section, was the work of the FESCI leadership who were keen to create incidents or ready to respond to any government provocation. For former Secretary-General *Oko Ménéda* (22 September 2003)

> ... that was our method of mobilization, our method of conquest, so to speak; we were toilers *(bosseurs)*, we were robots; we taught the youngsters to sacrifice themselves and to receive nothing in return.

[22] 'Lacrymogène Baule' was a self-made tear-gas bomb containing a mixture of kaolin and pepper powder.

For persuading the FESCI membership and the students to participate selflessly in the action, the FESCI leadership used a certain authority that it borrowed, among others, from the military and the school system. As for the former, FESCI gave its active members military ranks such as 'general' for the secretaries-general, 'colonel' or 'captain' for their deputies (*adjoints*), and 'sergeant' for ordinary members.

> That was first of all a question of discipline, but also [meant] to give a bit of courage to all of us who were confronting the police and the army. At the moments when they attacked us grievously we did not have weapons but only our ranks. (*Ramses Séry*, 25 May 2003)

The 'militarization' of the FESCI leadership also resulted in some of them using nicknames with clear military overtones, such as Che, Sankara or Sadam, or in naming their local sections after sites of (past) military conflict such as Kivu, Kosovo or Beirut. By qualifying its struggle as a military one and by associating itself with international revolutionary celebrities, the FESCI leadership can be said to have been 'heroizing' itself.

The second register of authority from which the FESCI leadership extracted power was the school system. For the public distribution of information or instructions, the leadership had recourse to pamphlets or flyers called 'TDs'. In normal university life, TD means *Travaux Dirigés* (guided works) and signifies all sorts of written assignments performed under the supervision of a teacher or lecturer. The FESCI TDs are similar in that they formulate an instruction to be carried out. In most cases, FESCI TDs contain a call (*mot d'ordre*) for a strike, a demonstration or some other impromptu action by which the student leaders who formulate them arrogate the position of an 'academic authority'.

Gathering authority from specific registers of hierarchy and obedience, the FESCI leadership instituted a state of alert on the campus, which required urgent and concerted action such as demanding the liberation of a FESCI leader from prison or the cancellation of a decision by a school authority to expel a group of insubordinate pupils. As a consequence, *Mandege Louis* (1 March 2003) explains, 'there was never much time to reflect on what all this meant'. Apart from the few who brought themselves to read Mao or Marcuse or who received some ideological guidance from 'elder brothers' in the broader opposition movement, there was no other training for the majority of the militants than that which they received 'in the field' (*sur le terrain*) and that was dictated by the pressing needs of the moment. This *modus operandi* could be found back in the relative importance or unimportance of certain posts in the FESCI national council. There, the national secretary responsible for instruction (*formation*) was far less important than the key functions of 'organization' and

'information' – the two pillars on which the student movement rested: the mobilization of students and the direction in which they marched.

If the FESCI leadership employed a number of powerful instruments to guide the movement from above, it equally exercised control over the production of revolutionary ideas and plans that emerged from below.

> During these [mass] meetings students adopted the habit of talking in public and some did very well. There were those who really stirred up the crowd, who guided (*oriente*) the students. Those we got afterwards for a function in the BEN [National Executive Council).

> But we could not have complete confidence in the crowd *(la foule)* because the crowd needed to be organized. Therefore we used the technique of the 'guided synthesis' (*la synthèse orientée*). When everybody had spoken, someone from the [FESCI] leadership provided a synthesis of the debate whereby the conclusion that the leadership favoured was presented as the only feasible one and was then approved by the crowd. (*Sanga Dogon*, 24 May 2003)

This quote provides one of the finest descriptions of what could be called FESCI populist tactics. It reveals a sophisticated combination of student empowerment through free expression and crowd management by which the inflamed student masses were turned into compliant followers of the FESCI leadership. This method of organizing the elicitation of consensus, I believe, is part and parcel of FESCI's search for hegemony among the students and sustains the claim that the students voice 'popular aspirations'.

This examination of how FESCI organized popular expression both from above and below ends this analysis of the FESCI discourse of youth and generation, and how this discourse featured in wider strategies to carve a space of alternative political representation for itself. This claim on representation was based on constructions of continuities and ruptures, inclusions and exclusions. Overall, FESCI inscribed itself in the long battle of the Ivorian people for national emancipation (continuity/inclusion) and positioned itself and was positioned (by the elders of the extended political and union family) as the advance guard in that ongoing struggle that needed constant renewal and a new political morale (rupture). The 'virtual' FESCI hegemony on the campus that resulted from this positioning was sustained by populist mobilization tactics that staged grass-roots spontaneity and student empowerment but resided on an unequal distribution of power and knowledge and resulted in the firm exclusion of possible dissidence.

FESCI discourse in the contemporary political project of autochthony

> Dictatorship is characterized by manifest violence. Mister Gbagbo is inherently violent. His whole political career has been based on violence. In 1990 when he spoke of multipartyism, he sent the students onto the streets to smash traffic lights, burn shops and steal loaves of bread. In 1992, he burned the entire Plateau district of Abidjan, before going to prison in order to pay for it.
> [Journalist:] With the help of the FESCI?
> [Soro Guillaume] (laughing). Let me first finish my answer to your question.[...]
> (*Fraternité Matin*, 2 April 2003)

That is how Soro Guillaume – FESCI's former secretary-general and now leader of the New Forces – presents his erstwhile *parents* as a gang of rascals and pilferers thrown onto the streets by the then opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo. Nevertheless, Soro Guillaume seems to find it difficult to explicitly identify these unruly youngsters as FESCI members. Following the above exchange, the interviewee, indeed, 'first answers the question' but he never comes back to the issue of the FESCI again in the interview. Surely, it is not easy to characterize as instrumentalized the members of an independent union that presented itself (and was at some stage presented by Soro Guillaume himself) as an 'autonomous and apolitical movement'. However, Soro Guillaume sees himself opposed to those many former Fescists who are leading figures in the Young Patriots movement, as well as to the present-day FESCI union that is a prominent member of the Young Patriots' Alliance. Above all, what Soro's statements bring out is that the battle over the FESCI legacy has been won by the Young Patriots and that the New Forces have no option other than to awkwardly dismiss the student movement, even in its past form.

Having won the struggle over FESCI's name and ideology, the Young Patriots took meanings from it which they do not only use themselves but also distribute or insert in the patriotic political discourse of President Laurent Gbagbo and his extensive entourage of supporters in political and civil society. One prominent figure of what opponents would call Gbagbo's civil society is Nyamien Messou, the present leader of the SYNARES teachers' union. When, during a patriotic talk on national television, Nyamien Messou was asked about the apparent success of the Young Patriot movement, he responded by saying that its success was quite normal and explained his answer by situating the new movement in a long tradition of resistance of the Ivorian people that began in the decolonization period. His historical digression is worth quoting *in extenso*.

> The Ivorian people have developed a habit. Before independence there was resistance. [...] Also in 1951 with the break of the RDA away from the Communist

> Party; later there was the *Loi-Cadre* [1956] and then the referendum of 1958 to ask the Africans whether they wanted independence or to remain as they were.[23] In 1960 there was also a bit of resistance and all the people of the resistance were thrown into prison around 1963 by Félix Houphouët; but the civil resistance continued to organize itself around the intellectuals, around the universities.
>
> In 1990 the people of Côte d'Ivoire took the opportunity once again to say that they wanted to express themselves. With multipartyism the awareness changed. [...] Then we arrive at the *coup d'état* of 1999. [...] The actors are the same only the scenery has changed. Now it is France who sponsors the new *coup d'etat* [of 2002] by multiplying the resources. [...] Also in 1999 the Ivorians did not understand very well what was going on. Now, however, they are more aware, their analytical abilities have increased. [...] That is why the civil resistance takes this new form different from 1999. (Nyamien Messou on *Radio Télévision Ivoire*, March 2003)

This illustrates the main dimensions of continuity/discontinuity and inclusion/-exclusion that the FESCI developed but that are now inserted in a new political project that could be qualified as autochthony-driven (Dozon 2000; Bayart *et al.* 2001). As far as the issue of 'imagined continuity' is concerned, the parallels with the FESCI discourse are obvious. Messou has constructed a national anti-imperialist tradition that goes back to the earliest moments of decolonization and thus traces a trajectory that coincides with the birth and the coming of age of the nation. Furthermore, this nationalist tradition does not reside in the ideas or interventions of politicians but is presented as the gradual manifestation of the will of the Ivorian people. This gradualness makes for a different approach to the dimension of rupture. Messou segments the national history whereby the different caesura represent moments of renewed and/or heightened awareness and combativeness that have culminated in the present patriotic movement. Finally, considering the inclusive/exclusive character of the movement, it can be seen how, in FESCI fashion, the militant scouts and the torch-bearing guides of this popular ascent to national consciousness are identified as the intelligentsia. Nonetheless, the vanguard qualities of the intellectuals are merely mentioned and their agency is largely overshadowed by that of an emerging 'people'.

Some striking resemblances between the FESCI discourse and that of the patriotic movement in the first few years of the 21st century show certain shifts that signal its insertion into a new-fangled political project. One major shift that allows us to begin to characterize this new project is the one from 'revolution' – indisputably one of the key metaphors of FESCI activism – to 'resistance', the central term indicating patriotic militancy. Read in contrast to the (Fesci)

[23] See footnote 11.

'revolution', (patriotic) 'resistance' redefines the different groups of actors engaged in the present struggle, as well as the terrain on which they are operating.

Contrary to revolution and avant-garde ideological struggle, 'resistance' emphasizes continuity over rupture and inclusion over exclusion. Such can be clearly seen in Messou's story of the gradual up-scaling of national awareness among the Ivorian people as a whole. This generalization is of course quite a daring one and throws light on the politics of history that informs it.

In simple historiographic terms, what Messou reconstructs is what Bayart (2003) calls the Ivorian 'nationalist tradition' in the form of an ongoing series of confrontations – first with the French colonizer, then with the France-friendly regime of Houphouët-Boigny, and now with an allegedly French-backed rebellion – concerning genuine national sovereignty against colonial, neo-colonial or contemporary imperialist interference. By equating the history of nationalism with that of the nation and by associating the struggle of the nationalists with that of the Ivorians, Messou operates a virtual collusion of 'the nationalists' with 'the nationals'. In this way, he links up political orientation with citizenship and presents adherence to nationalism not so much as engaging in politics but rather as performing one's civil duty. Redefined in this way, politics and citizenship boil down to the same idealized loyalty to the nation and the ruptures and exclusions in this mystifying unity of history, politics and population are largely defined along these lines.

The ones who are seen as standing out in a positive way by showing exemplary loyalism are the youth. This is poignantly expressed by Charles Groguhet in one of the opening quotes of this chapter. For Groguhet, the 'new youth' and 'the new generation' announce the culmination of the 'nationalist tradition', the advent of genuine sovereignty and of a new nation. The negative equivalent of the Young Patriots are the New Forces and their partisans who are not so much presented as political opponents, for instance as 'anti-nationalists', but as 'non-nationals' or 'anti-nationals' and generally as 'uncivil' people or second-rate (disloyal or untrustworthy) civilians.

Apart from being identified within the temporal framework of national history, the three groups – the young patriots, the patriots/nationals, and the non-patriots/non-nationals – are also positioned in the spatial framework of a hegemonic struggle. Here too, the shift from 'revolution' to 'resistance' is an analytically helpful one. Making use of Gramsci's terminology, it could be said that while revolution is essentially a 'war of manoeuvre' that entails mobility and expedition, 'resistance' has all the makings of a 'war of position' that resolves around entrenchment and staying power. In patriotic discourse, the present war of position is fought on one's own territory with 'the weapons of the weak'.

The 'weapons' that the patriotic movement claims to possess combine physical/military weakness with strength of spirit. Both meanings figure prominently in the quote by Bernard Dadié at the beginning of this chapter. By describing the hands of the new youth as 'unarmed' and with 'no intention of grabbing a portfolio', Dadié invites us to read 'resistance' as combining the sticks-and-stones street violence of youngsters with their tenacity and incurruptibility. Likewise, their opponents are characterized as ideologically spineless and self-seeking political entrepreneurs who, because of their (financial) backing by exterior imperialist forces, possess the kind of superior professional weapons with which they crush the will of the people.

This entire characterization of the warring parties is highly reminiscent of FESCI descriptions of itself as an 'anti-political movement' facing an opportunistic regime that is 'armed to the teeth'. The main difference lies in the space in which this battle unfolds. The discourse of continuity and inclusion that the FESCI developed had a strong horizontal dimension that was articulated through the occupation of public space (demonstrations), geopolitical expansion (expatriation), and claims of expressing the popular 'will'. This spatial dimension was supplemented by a temporal (vertical) one by which the FESCI inscribed itself in the nationalist struggle. What we see happening in the discourse of the Young Patriots, and is attested by Charles Groguhet's quote at the beginning of the chapter, is the extension of this temporal dimension to include 'the ancestors'. In such a way, Groguhet is working towards conditioning patriotic loyalty on Ivorian ancestry.

Conclusion

Most studies of autochthony movements in Africa and far beyond agree that their breeding ground needs to be situated at the conjunction of economic (globalization), political (democratization) and socio-economic (freeing of labour) developments (Bayart *et al.* 2001; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000). I have tried to show elsewhere (Arnaut 2004b) that, in the case of Côte d'Ivoire, autochthony also needs to be situated in a long national history of categorizations of people along different lines (ethnic, religious, political, in terms of nationality) because it rearticulates existing categories into the autochthone-allochthone dichotomy. This chapter may be read as a case study in this broader project that seeks to excavate the layers of older discourses that can be found in the present autochthony rhetoric.

Other authors have noticed the importance of youth and student organizations in the development of autochthony movements, for instance in Cameroon (Konings this volume) and, in the case of Côte d'Ivoire of the FESCI and the Young Patriots in reshaping the political landscape (Konaté 2003, Banégas & Marshall-Fratani 2000). Overall, one can observe in these studies a strong inclination as to how youth and student organizations are instrumentalized by older political leaders. This, of course, is often contradicted by the youth movements themselves, not least by the Young Patriots in Côte d'Ivoire, by stressing their independence as a grass-roots popular movement and claiming ideological autonomy. In its theoretical outlook and its analytical focus and by the choice of its empirical material, this chapter seeks to transcend this divide between instrumentalization and autonomy.

The central argument is that one of the key players in the present-day autochthony movement in Côte d'Ivoire – the Young Patriots – is reclaiming central elements of discourse from the FESCI student union and is inscribing these in a new political project that is being carried by the FPI socialist party and is embodied by current President Laurent Gbagbo. This discursive continuity or stability can in itself be taken as demonstrating the relative 'autonomy' of the student movement since the 1990s. Looking further into which discursive elements are being transferred, we get a better grasp of what, in the way of discursive constructions, the Young Patriots have to offer to the autochthony movement.

The theoretical option taken in this chapter posits a fundamental coevalness between scholars and social actors in their conceptualization of youth and generation.[24] For both groups, it is argued, the latter concepts walk a fine (and often ambiguously vague) line between continuity and rupture, inclusion and exclusion. This is attested by a review of the scholarly literature on youth and generation, and by an in-depth analysis of the FESCI discourse. Turning then to the transfer and contribution (willing or not) of the FESCI to the Young Patriots movement, we can begin to discern that, on essential points, the youngsters are strategic partners of the socialist party and President Gbagbo in the articulation and, above all, the attempted imposition of their new, autochthony-driven political project. It would require more space to sufficiently argue the latter point but my analysis so far leads me to believe that the survival of Gbagbo as the carrier of the hegemonic struggle he currently embodies depends to a large extent on his deep association with the ideas and manifestations of the Young Patriots. Whether Gbagbo and/or the Young Patriots survive or not is another

[24] The concept of 'coevalness' was introduced into anthropology by Fabian (1983) when he denounced the anthropologists' denial to 'share time' with their 'subjects' and instead suggested that they engage in a dialectical relationship with them. This idea is taken to heart in this chapter, as well as Kelly's (1999: 264) further elaboration of the challenge of coevalness, namely that anthropologists must 'seek the temporality within the "political confrontations already in place"'.

question altogether, but it is difficult to imagine at this point how any alternative political leader will be able to formulate a new future for Côte d'Ivoire without taking on board the 'youth' that over the last decade and more have so thoroughly inscribed themselves in projects for the regeneration of the Ivorian nation.

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6

War, changing ethics and the position of youth in South Sudan

Jok Madut Jok

This chapter considers the position of youth and children in the context of the on-going war in Sudan, focusing in particular on the war-provoked and growing contradiction between norms held by the Dinka about the importance of children and child-bearing and what young people went through during the second round of the north-south conflict on the other. Three questions are asked. What are the beliefs and values that place children at the centre of people's social and cultural lives? Are the current youth-related issues a result of war or are they ordinary socio-cultural changes that every society must undergo? What do Sudanese communities and humanitarian aid agencies reckon are the main problems facing youth or caused by youth, and what solutions are envisaged? The conclusion arrived at is that violence perpetrated by or exercised against youth is not just the immediate outcome of a prolonged war but is also the sharp end of a long historical process.

Introduction

Much of the literature on wartime violence tends to focus on the use of extreme violence used by the warring parties against civilians under each other's control as a means of fighting the war, i.e. to destabilize the opposing group's support base. But important as it is to document such abuses, equally important and most insidious are the ways in which violence is carried out within the communities by members of armed groups who hail from these same communities. The emergence of sub-cultures of violence during armed conflicts, as seen in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Liberia, northern Uganda and other countries, has